



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Celebrating 25 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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Sandra Rudnick
Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Martha Trevino Powell
Dr. Harriette F. Williams

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **June 21, 2010**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi	Rev. Cecil L. Murray
Patricia Curry	Dr. Maria A. Prieto
Ann Franzen	Sandra Rudnick
Susan F. Friedman	Stacey Savelle
Helen A. Kleinberg	Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Dr. Harriette F. Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Steven M. Olivas, Esq.	Martha Trevino Powell
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I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Curry at 10:05 a.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

Ms. Aleen Langton, County Counsel, introduced Ms. Laura Hinojosa, and reported that Ms. Hinojosa will be replacing her as the County Counsel for the Commission.

III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- **June 21, 2010**

Action Taken:

On motion of Commissioner Biondi, seconded by Commissioner Murray (Commissioners Olivas and Trevino Powell being absent), the agenda for June 21, 2010, was unanimously approved. Chair Curry noted that Item VI (*Motion by Commissioner Curry to Approve a Letter to the Board of Supervisors regarding Youth Permanency*) will be continued to the meeting of July 19, 2010, as indicated on the agenda.

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IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- **May 17, 2010**

Action Taken:

On motion of Commissioner Prieto, seconded by Commissioner Kleinberg (Commissioners Olivas and Trevino Powell being absent), the minutes for May 17, 2010, were unanimously approved as submitted ([copy on file](#)).

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Curry reported the following:

- The *Celebration'10 Honoring the Academic Achievement of Foster Youth* graduation event was held on June 8, 2010, at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.
- The Commission will continue to work on preparing the 2009-10 Commission Annual Report. Committee Chairs were requested to submit their draft reports no later than June 24, 2010, for inclusion to the Annual Report. She encouraged all Commissioners to contribute to the Annual Report.
- The Commission is interested in forming an Oversight MHSA (Mental Health Services Act) Committee in light of recent concerns regarding MHSA funding and programs. Commissioners were invited to join this Committee. Additional information regarding this new Committee will be forthcoming.
- The Department of Mental Health is seeking nominations for its System Leadership Team (SLT) – a stakeholder body that monitors the implementation of the MHSA Plans within the County -- to which Commissioner Sorkin was nominated by the Chair to represent the Commission. Updates on SLT will be provided by Commissioner Sorkin.

Action Taken:

Chair Curry's verbal report was received and filed.

VI. MOTION BY COMMISSIONER CURRY TO APPROVE A LETTER TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REGARDING YOUTH PERMANENCY

Action Taken:

This item was continued to the meeting of July 19, 2010 at the request of Commissioner Curry.

VII. PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

- a. Update on the Priorities of the Probation Department**

**Donald H. Blevins,
Chief Probation Officer**

The Commission welcomed Mr. Donald H. Blevins, Chief Probation Officer, who was invited to provide an update on the priorities and the current condition of the Probation Department, his plans, and future goals. Former Interim Chief of Probation, Calvin Remington was also present.

Chief Blevins noted that the Probation Department faces many problems, as recently highlighted by the media, and that the Department of Justice (DOJ) has been an active oversight entity since 2000.

He further added the following:

- The Probation Department must make youth a priority in probation camps and juvenile halls. School programs need to be improved, and because the department has youths beyond school hours, there needs to be enrichment and cognitive programs in place. Additionally, staff needs to be more engaged with the youth.
- Although Juvenile Halls do not have the DOJ oversight, there is a plan for their review.
- There are several issues surrounding Probation Camps. For example, the school program at Challenger Memorial Youth Center in Lancaster is not providing the level of service required.
- The Probation Department recently hired two retired former Chief Probation Officers as consultants, who will bring expertise and vast experience to the Department. The two consultants have drafted a comprehensive study of the Department which will become public record soon. This study covers all issues and concerns facing the Department including, but not limited to: staffing and programming, lack of oversight and accountability, and poor management and staffing practices.
- A change that will be implemented soon is the empowerment of Probation Camp Superintendents who formerly were just following instruction given.
- Due to the high number of youth that crossover from DCFS to Probation; Chief Blevins stressed the importance of collaborating and communicating with DCFS.
- Judge Nash has noted that the 241.1 processes are working well. Historically there have been struggles between DCFS and Probation in deciding placement of youth with the appropriate Department. Determination should be based on which system best serves the youth's needs.

- The Statewide initiative through the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWSCMS) to share information between different Departments and agencies is important; the initiative prevents departments from working within their own silos. Participating in information sharing will enable vital information about a youth and their families, thereby improving delivery of services.
- He is pleased and supports Los Angeles County participation in the Title IV-E Waiver which has provided additional funding for reinvestment. Probation is currently reinvesting Waiver funds to reduce the number of youth in placement. The Department is also working diligently with the State and Federal Government to get additional Waiver funding to supplant that 32% increase that was given to providers and was not included in the Waiver.
- The Department has implemented Cross Systems Case Management and Case Plans and Functional Family Therapy (FFT) which are critical when servicing family and the youth who have the potential to enter the system at some point in time.
- A future design for Probation camps will be to group youth with similar problems and issues together, and to have trained staff to address youth with similar needs.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Chief Blevins added the following:

- Youth with mental health problems are the fastest growing population. As such, it is critical to have a good relationship with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) because Probation needs its services.
- The Probation Department needs to improve its current process of transitioning youth out of Probation. The process must begin long before youth are released to Communities. To that end, Chief Blevins wants to build a system in which re-entry or transition deputies work with youth and their families two or three months before they transition out. Additionally, similar services to those provided in camps must be made available in the communities so that youth continue to receive the same level of treatment. A school program should also be made available to every youth released from Probation.

The Probation Department is currently searching for an Educational Director to improve the educational services offered to youth within Probation. It will review also the *Educational Redesign Plan* that has been reviewed by the Children's Planning Council, the Education Coordinating Council, and the Board of Supervisors.

- Chief Blevins is not in favor of a separate juvenile and adult Probation Department as there is no evidence to suggest that separation has improved the quality of services delivered to youth and adults. The current organizational structure within the Probation Department is being reviewed.
- The number of youth placed in Group Homes has decreased; however, there is room for enhancement in this area. There have been two adoptions thus far, but a stronger emphasis on Permanency is needed.
- Chief Blevins stressed the importance of accountability and noted that punishing youth is an archaic way of thinking. He has a zero tolerance for abuse of children and will ensure that there is staff accountability.
- Collaboration with other social and human services departments is a priority for the Probation Department.

Chief Blevins looks forward to a future with positive changes in the Probation Department. He acknowledges that there are many issues that still need to be addressed, however, is confident that with the assistance of former Interim Chief Remington, consultants, and the optimism displayed by Probation staff, solutions and positive outcomes will be obtained. He commended the Commission's dedication and persistence in advocating for children and families in Los Angeles County for the best possible services available to them.

Action Taken:

After discussion, the Commission received and filed the verbal report provided by Mr. Donald H. Blevins, Chief Probation Officer.

**b. Overview on Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)/
Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI)
Services for Children and At Risk Youth**

Bryan Mershon, DMH

Mr. Bryan Mershon and Dr. William Arroyo, Department of Mental Health (DMH), provided an overview on Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)/Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Services for Children and At Risk youth, and responded to questions posed by the Commission. Dr. Karen Striech and Ms. Gita Cugley were present at the meeting.

Dr. Arroyo reported the following:

- Community services and support is the largest component of the MHSA Act which accounts for approximately 80 percent of the MHSA funds available; Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) accounts for approximately 20 percent of MHSA funds.

- PEI began in 2008 with the organization of planning groups for all Service Planning Areas (SPAs). Through extensive deliberations, each SPA group developed a list of priorities for the use of available funds. The California State Department of Mental Health and the Oversight and Accountability Commission (a new State agency established by the MHSA to oversee the implementation of PEI) provided guidance on the priorities developed.
- DMH receives financial support from a wide array of funding streams of which the MHSA is just one. Within the MHSA, there is an additional 1 percent tax that is levied on the portion of taxpayers' incomes in excess of \$1 million. However, the money is not received until two years after the year in which the money was collected by the Auditor-Controller. For fiscal year 2009-10, the revenue is substantial, but unfortunately in two years, there will be a projected 40 percent shortfall.
- While DMH does not face financial problems for Fiscal Year 2009-10, problems will arise following expenses incurred for the creation of programs. The question remains as to where funding will come from to sustain the programs for the next two years. DMH relies on State revenue to fund its programs, and the State revenue is derived from vehicle licensing fees. Therefore when these fees fluctuate; DMH's revenue fluctuates as well.
- DMH has had to implement curtailments twice this fiscal year and was instructed by the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to start cutting back services. Concurrently, while DMH curtails traditional services, it is implementing the new PEI services and programs which are funded by different sources.
- DMH held training seminars for PEI providers. There were six such workshops with approximately 1,000 attendees. DMH is holding providers accountable for outcomes, something DMH has not done before. As a part of the initial implementation of the PEI plans, DMH has provided training to over 1500 line staff of the providers.
- The age group of 0-21 was the first group to implement the PEI plan. The older TAY group will begin implementation in early fiscal year 2010-11.

Mr. Mershon provided the Commission with a statistical handout ([copy on file](#)) on Child Full Service Partnerships (FSP) and Field Capable Clinical Services (FCCS) provided by DMH, and responded to questions posed by the Commission.

Action Taken:

After discussion, the Commission received and filed the verbal report provided by Dr. Arroyo and Mr. Mershon.

c. Protocol for Probation Fatalities

Susan F. Friedman

Commissioner Friedman reported the following:

- In the Fall of 2009, the Children's Board Deputies met with Chair Curry and suggested that the Commission draft a protocol for the Probation Department to study and keep track of youth fatalities. Several Commissioners met with members from the Probation Commission and Mr. Dave Mitchell and Ms. Sharon Harada from the Probation Department, and decided that this needed to be a collaborative effort, subsequently forming the Protocol for Probation Fatalities Ad-Hoc Committee.
- A draft protocol was developed to track youth fatalities and conduct administrative reviews of systemic problems in the Probation Department.
- Ms. Harada and Mr. Mitchell are taking the draft protocol to County Counsel for review; a copy of the report and recommendations will be forthcoming.

Chair Curry added that perhaps these recommendations should be sent to the Board of Supervisors, who will then decide appropriate actions needed.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There was none.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There was none.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Curry at 12:04 a.m.